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Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*) (A/53/841; A/54/34 and A/54/223)

1. **Mr. Ouedraogo** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit), noting that in draft resolution A/C.5/54/L.5, which had been adopted by the Fifth Committee, the General Assembly stressed again that the impact of the activities of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was a shared responsibility of the Member States, the Unit and the secretariats of the participating organizations, said that, for its part, JIU would do its best to remain useful to all the participating organizations and to retain the trust of the Member States.

2. The improvement of oversight mechanisms, both internal and external, was an absolute necessity for United Nations organizations at a time when, while facing budgetary constraints, they must satisfy the demands of the Member States for cost-effectiveness and efficiency and meet the growing expectations of civil society. The system of follow-up on the recommendations of JIU, which had been approved by the Committee in the same draft resolution, should prove useful to the General Assembly when, at its fifty-sixth session, it came to consider the functioning of JIU and compliance with the commitments made by each. It would also be useful if the governing bodies of other participating organizations would carry out a similar exercise.

3. Introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/54/34), he said that JIU had endeavoured to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 48/221 and 50/233 and that it had, on its own initiative, modified the method of selecting its chairman and vice-chairman. Elections to those two posts would no longer follow the principle of regional rotation but would be open to all, since the Unit had considered that the Inspectors were all nominated by the General Assembly in the same manner and that, in order to ensure effective leadership, it would be better if the elections expressed the choice of the Inspectors themselves. As for the question of the selection of qualified Inspectors, that was a matter for the Member States to decide.

4. He pointed out that the staff resources of JIU had remained unchanged since 1968 and said that serious consideration should be given to increasing them.

5. With regard to the administrative and budgetary operational independence of the Unit, it would be helpful if the General Assembly would clarify its interpretation of article 20.1 of the Joint Inspection Unit statute. Currently, the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, a subsidiary organ of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, acting on behalf of the secretariats, exercised the right to examine the budget estimates prepared by JIU, whose independence was thereby jeopardized by the very organizations which it was required to inspect. In order to rectify the situation, it was proposed that the Unit's budget estimates should be submitted to the General Assembly, together with a report from the Administrative Committee on Coordination containing any counter-proposals, and a report from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the budget estimates and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The Member States would thus be the final judges of proposals made by JIU.

6. With regard to relations with the participating organizations and oversight bodies, JIU was determined to follow more closely the conclusions of the debates of the various governing bodies and to become more familiar with the functioning of the secretariats. In particular, it planned to intensify its collaboration with the internal audit services and other oversight bodies. It was very satisfied with its collaboration with the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors, with which it was preparing to participate in a third tripartite meeting.

7. The Joint Inspection Unit had undertaken to issue a series of notes for the executive heads of the participating organizations on the treatment of its reports by the governing bodies and on improvements to be made in that regard. Three reports (International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) had already been issued and two others (World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) would soon be issued.

8. In conclusion, he invited comments from Member States on the preliminary listing of potential reports for 2000 and beyond, in accordance with article 9 of the Joint Inspection Unit statute. Useful comments had already been made by FAO and it would be helpful if the General Assembly would also comment.

9. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) emphasized the importance of an independent unit with broad powers of investigation in all matters and charged with proposing solutions that could be implemented. He hoped that the work of the Joint Inspection Unit would lead to better coordination of the activities of the participating organizations.

10. He recalled the recommendations which had been made during the seminar held in Princeton in October 1998

on ways of improving the functioning of the oversight bodies of the United Nations system. These were that: (i) the executive heads of the participating organizations should send their comments on the JIU reports which concerned them within two months so that they could be included as annexes to the reports if they were not accepted by the Unit; (ii) the Joint Inspection Unit should clearly indicate to the executive heads what recommendations required approval by the legislative organs of the organizations concerned; (iii) the candidatures of Inspectors nominated by the regional groups should be reviewed by an independent group and the recommended candidates should be appointed by the General Assembly; (iv) in order for JIU to have sufficient financial independence, it should be allowed to submit its budget estimates to the Secretary-General, who would send them to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, together with the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and then to the General Assembly for approval, and JIU needed to have sufficient authority delegated to it on administrative issues, at least as much authority as was enjoyed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; (v) in order for JIU to be efficient and cost-effective, it should be possible to reduce the number of Inspectors by almost half while maintaining geographical representation and reasonable rotation; (vi) the secretariat of JIU should, on the other hand, be strengthened; (vii) the Chairman, who should be elected for a non-renewable term at the level of Under-Secretary-General as in the case of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, should be held accountable for compliance with the statute, standards and procedures of JIU; (viii) JIU should make more frequent use of notes and confidential letters, as envisaged in its statute.

11. Reaffirming the importance of the work of JIU, he said that an effective system of follow-up on the Unit's recommendations was essential.

12. **Mr. Repash** (United States of America) said that unfortunately the oversight bodies were often overlooked and he was therefore pleased that the first draft resolution adopted by the Committee during the current session concerned the Joint Inspection Unit.

13. With regard to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/54/34), he noted from paragraph 4 that, in addition to the reports which it prepared, JIU also prepared notes and confidential letters addressed to organizations. He would like to know how many notes and confidential letters had been produced and on what topics. He would also like to know whether the various types of reports mentioned had resulted in savings or improvements in the management or operations of the organizations. Noting that, according to paragraph 11, JIU had produced nine reports during the 18-month period under consideration, he asked whether the productivity of the Unit was comparable to that of the previous period and, if that was not the case, what was the reason. He also asked for clarification concerning the issue of the administrative and budgetary operational independence of JIU since paragraphs 19 and 20 of the report appeared to be contradictory. Lastly, he welcomed the fact that JIU now had a useful oversight tool in the system of follow-up on reports. His delegation hoped that the new system would be implemented rapidly and it awaited the results with interest.

14. His delegation thought that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/54/223) provided an overview of the measures that had been taken, but it would also have liked to have a clear indication of what actions had been taken as a direct result of the Unit's recommendations. It would also like to know what had been the rationale for the selection of the JIU reports, some of which went back as far as 1993. It would be useful to report on all the Unit's reports so that the Committee could assess their impact and the degree of compliance with the suggestions and advice contained in them. Since a new follow-up system had been approved, he wondered whether there was still a need for a report by the Secretary-General. It was his delegation's understanding that JIU would provide its own report on the implementation of its recommendations and that would negate the need for a separate report by the Secretary-General. He would like to hear the views of the Chairman of JIU on that issue.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.